Lions and the Reproduction of White Supremacy in Northwest Namibia, 1800s-1990. [under review]

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Abstract

Human-lion interactions are historically contingent and can be factors in historical inequalities. Drawing upon archival documents, published sources, limited-circulation government documents, and oral history interviews, this ‘animal-sensitive history’ shows that human-lion interactions reproduced white supremacy during the South African colonial era in northwest Namibia. Through racialized policies and practices, the colonial state drove asymmetric socioeconomic outcomes for Africa pastoralists and European settlers. Emphasizing the neighboring areas of Etosha and the Kaokoveld, this article shows that human-lion interactions contributed to racialized colonial rule. As a result, the geography of human-lion interactions, and of lion survival, was transformed in these spaces. This has had lingering effects for African pastoralists in the post-independence era. Centering humans, livestock, and lions in rural northwest Namibia, this article contributes to human-animal scholarship, the environmental history of Namibia as part of the South African empire, and southern histories.

INTRODUCTION

During South Africa’s colonization of Namibia, ideologies of white supremacy reached beyond social and civil society to the wildlife and landscape. Since independence (1990) political and social transformations are moving Namibia towards a more just and equitable society, but decolonization has not emphasized the more-than-human effects of South African imperial rule.¹ Throughout the colonial era, human-lion (Panthera leo) interactions were differently experienced by white settlers and Africans as expressions of racialized social and environmental politics. This case study examines the changing character of human-lion interactions in northwest Namibia for their interwoven valences of social, economic, and environmental inequalities.² What is revealed is that white supremacy was reproduced through human-lion interactions, yielding historical and contemporary effects.

Lions historically occurred across central and northern Namibia.³ Today they persist in the wild in the northwest and north-eastern parts of the country.⁴ Lions in northwest Namibia are the most geographically isolated free-ranging population of lions in southern Africa, and exhibit behavioral and social adaptations specific to their arid environments.⁵ I focus on this population due to high government interest in resolving contemporary human-lion conflicts in the northwest, particularly within the

¹ S. Whatmore, Hybrid Geographies: Natures, Cultures, Spaces (London, 2002).
⁵ Free-ranging is defined as lions inhabiting fenced areas >1,000 km² in size, or partially fenced areas >500 km². IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group, ‘Guidelines’, 69; [citation removed].
neighboring spaces of Etosha and Kunene (formerly Kaokoveld). I begin by reviewing the long history of human-lion interactions in northwest Namibia. This shows that human-lion interactions do not have a fundamental expression. Rather, changing practices of white supremacy reproduced human inequalities, leading to spatially distinct socioeconomic and human-lion outcomes. In particular, asymmetric colonial efforts to protect white-owned livestock – cattle (*Bos taurus*), goats (*Capra aegagrus*), and sheep (*Ovis aries*) – were integral to colonial white supremacy. Human-lion interactions were also greatly influenced by changing land-use designations. The rise of wildlife conservation in the 1940s-50s made Etosha Game Reserve a space where lions thrived. In contrast, Kaokoveld remained a space inhabited by humans, livestock, and lions, with each suffering as a result.

My analysis draws upon scholarship from human-animal studies. This is central to writing an ‘animal-sensitive history.’ Human-animal studies is a diverse field of scholarship accounting for animal agency and providing alternate theorizations to hierarchical ordering of human over animal. By focusing on human-(livestock-)-lion interactions, I show that predators and livestock were vectors for reproducing inequality. This study contributes to the scholarship of the global south; which problematizes discourses of deferred or tardy historical change within the so-called ‘Third’ or ‘developing’ world. The different experiences of whites versus Africans within the human-lion nexus echoes historian Emmanuel Krieke’s position that environmental changes in Namibia did not follow a ‘unilinear Nature-to-Culture’ narrative. Examining more-than-human factors adds to the environmental historian’s toolkit for interpreting the different valences of the South African empire. My approach affirms the position that ‘[p]ower…is the real topic of environmental history.’ Historical human-lion interactions consistently reveal asymmetries in power entailing the reproduction of white supremacy. Many of the issues raised remain pertinent to decolonization challenges and questions of socioeconomic justice in northwest Namibia.

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Available material on human-lion interactions in northwest Namibia is limited, and diverse in format. Precolonial accounts primarily come from European ‘explorers’, who entered the region prior to widespread colonization. Colonial era records primarily come from Namibia’s National Archives and published sources. Environmental historian Lance Van Sittert notes that the reliance on elite archives within the historiography of wild animals in southern Africa risks continuing to subsume subaltern perspectives. Bringing-forth different experiences is an intervention in the reproduction of historical inequalities. Oral accounts of communal pastoralists, have been collected by me and are drawn from published anthropological works. Grey literature and limited-circulation documents detail changing lion conservation efforts. My own lens is informed by more than three years of lion conservation and community extension work in northwest Namibia. The specificity of treating placed-based human-lion interactions enacts the position that lions and humans are adaptable, dynamic, historical entities. It follows that human-lion interactions will be site-specific.

PAN-AFRICAN HUMAN-LION NARRATIVES
Environmental historians have examined the role of elite European hunters in forging western perspectives of typical interactions between humans and African wildlife. Within the English-speaking world, early popular accounts emphasized the experiences of British and American hunters in present-day Kenya and Tanzania. John Patterson’s book, reports of US President Roosevelt’s safaris, and works by Ernest Hemingway, all feature violent human-lion interactions and emphasize the prospect of human death from lions. Most famously, a pair of maneless lions terrorized workers on the Kenya-Uganda railway in 1898. In 1925 one lion is believed to have killed 84 people in Uganda. Between 1932 and 1947, lions in the Njombe district of southern Tanzania killed an estimated 1500 people before the pride was eradicated. Though specific numbers may be exaggerated, they likely undersell the death toll: across Africa untold numbers of ‘natives’ died from lions during the colonial era, but most deaths went unrecorded.

Early scientific perspectives of lions also primarily came from Kenya and Tanzania. Biologist George Schaller’s The Serengeti Lion, was among the first high-profile scientific works on the species, and

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15 [citation removed]
became the standard understanding of lion behavior, ecology, and sociality for a generation. In 1978, Craig Packer took over the Serengeti Lion Project, which he directed for more than 30 years; authoring dozens of scientific and popular articles, and two books on lions in the area. As a result of this research lions from these areas are among the most studied, publicized, and consistently conserved in the world.

Similarly, colonial legacies affect the geography of remnant lion populations. Until the twentieth century, lions ranged across African habitats, including a variety of arid environments. In the early twenty-first century lion range has been reduced to approximately ten per cent of their historically-recorded range and has decreased by 43 per cent in the past twenty-plus years. There are currently 20,000-30,000 free-ranging lions in Africa. As many as half of these reside in East Africa, primarily within Serengeti or similar grassland ecosystems. In contrast, unrest in formerly lion-rich places, such as West Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, and the lingering effects of apartheid in Namibia, often kept information about lions in these places from reaching international audiences. Many of these countries contain lions inhabiting settings radically different from Serengeti, including the forests of West Africa and Mozambique and the deserts of Botswana and northwest Namibia.

21 IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group, 'Guidelines'.
THE SHARED LANDSCAPE

Genetic evidence indicates lions have inhabited northwest Namibia for tens of thousands of years. Prior to the arrival of intensive pastoralism, the region was home to small bands of highly-mobile Khoe-San hunter-gatherers. Anthropological work by Ute Dieckmann with the Hai||om, a Khoe-San group residing near Etosha, suggests that lions and hunter-gatherers can maintain somewhat collegial relationships.

22 A. Antunes et al., ‘The Evolutionary Dynamics of the Lion Panthera Leo Revealed by Host and Viral Population Genomics’, *PLOS Genetics* 4:11 (2008), 1–11.
Dieckmann recorded local memories of lions and humans each recognizing the others’ dominance based upon different times of day or night. One man remembered that when he was young,

‘We even shared meat with the lions. In the daytime we took their meat and at night we served them our wounded game!’ Another elaborates that ‘the lions were regarded as “colleagues,”’ if not friends.’ And if they tried to attack them? Kadison explains that there was a saying shouted at approaching lions: ‘||Gaisi at!nakarasa!’, meaning ‘You ugly face, go away!’

During their Serengeti research, Schaller and anthropologist Gordon Lowther found lions to be ‘little inclined to attack during the day.’ They posited that groups of hominid hunter-gatherers could cautiously move through the landscape in daylight. They put this proposition to the test by stalking game and scavenging carcasses on foot. Analogizing their experiences to early hominids, Schaller and Lowther concluded that,

If they kept in open country, away from thickets in which lions often rest, and traveled in groups, a practice which would increase their rank in the inter-specific predator hierarchy, hominids would probably have been molested only rarely. Even when encountering a predator at close quarters, they could have put it to flight by using such typical primate intimidation displays as vocalizing and throwing and shaking branches, a technique effective against today's predators.

Biologist Hans Kruuk has challenged these assertions, noting that, ‘present-day lions are conditioned to people being armed and dangerous.’ Though Kruuk also notes human-lion antagonism may be driven by lion cultural transmission, suggesting that, ‘one animal learning from another, plays a role in prey selection…Perhaps lions have now learned from their elders that people do not fit into their normal spectrum of prey species.’

Field work in northwest Namibia supports the perspective that human-lion interactions cannot be essentialized as violent or antagonistic. On numerous occasions lions avoided small groups of people traveling on foot during the daytime. In contrast, lions were much bolder at night, sometimes investigating groups of people, including approaching the open windows of an unfamiliar research vehicle and lingering nearby while their pride-mates were immobilized and collared. Because human-lion interactions take a variety of forms historians can examine the contingencies of different interactions.

LIVESTOCK AND LIONS

23 R. van Schalkwyk and H. Berry, eds., Etosha 100: Celebrating a Hundred Years of Conservation (Windhoek, 2007), 66; 73.
25 Kruuk, Hunter, 113.
26 Kruuk, Hunter, 62.
27 Personal observation.
The presence or absence of livestock is a critical mediating factor in human-lion interactions. This was recognized by one Himba in the late twentieth century,

Those of us who have lived with lion know that, like all animals, and indeed like people, each lion is different. Most lions cannot be allowed to remain near stock. They are killers of cattle and must die. Others who do not know cattle may be timid and leave cattle to graze in peace.28

The mediating role of livestock ties lions to the historical creation and maintenance of socioeconomic power. In northwest Namibia, an arid region without sustaining agricultural prospects, the arrival of livestock, beginning in the last few centuries BCE, would have had significant livelihood effects.29 Sheep were present in the northern Namib desert two thousand years ago; cattle arrived in large numbers during the last one thousand years.30 While indigenous goats and sheep – weighing an average 29-32 kg and 50-90 kg respectively – could feed a small group of lions for a day or two, large-bodied cattle – 300-600 kg – could feed them for a number of days.31 The introduction of large numbers of domestic stock, not as adapted to resisting predators as wild prey were, would have been a boon for lions. Historian William Beinart has shown that predators at the Cape quickly adapted to the novel opportunities presented by the slower, less dangerous animals that were crowding-out wild prey.32 As Mahesh Rangarajan has noted for India’s Gir Forest, ‘herding of sheep, cattle, and goats offered large cats and canids easy meat on the hoof...That lions should hunt cattle was only logical.’33 One Herero pastoralist put the matter succinctly: ‘If you are only a person you can live with lions. But if you are having livestock, then it is not good.’34

Historian Jon Coleman has found that livestock’s arrival in colonial North American created relationships that predators were ill-equipped to navigate. ‘Wild’ animals generally evince great fear of humans, and with good reason: human avoidance has been a survival tactic for thousands of years. However, predators evolved no such fear of livestock. Coleman shows that livestock reproduction, and by extension the reproduction of human livelihoods, lay at the heart of human-wolf conflict. This led to a ‘communication disaster.’ ‘Wolves’, Coleman writes, ‘had enough sensibility to retreat from people, but…[w]hen they sank their teeth into cows, pigs, and sheep, wolves committed sins unimaginable to them’.35 He continues:

33 Rangarajan, 'Animals', 113.
34 Interview with Anabeb Pastoralist #8, 25 October 2017.
‘Wolves and people were not natural enemies...humans’ relationship with other animals established their rivalry with wolves.’\textsuperscript{36} As a mobile repository of wealth and source of income, livestock, being worth far more alive than dead, are what human-animal geographer Maan Barua calls, ‘living’ or ‘lively commodities’.\textsuperscript{37} When lions attack livestock they constrain human livelihoods, thereby threatening individual and group resilience.

Intensive pastoralism in northwest Namibia increased in the sixteenth century, coinciding with the arrival of the ovaHerero people.\textsuperscript{38} With the ovaHerero came large numbers of cattle. The economic value of a growing livestock culture was reinforced by European trading ships moving along the Skeleton Coast. To benefit from this new market, Khoe-Sān pastoralists maintained stock camps near Walvis Bay throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, without sufficient water or suitable forage at the coast, these pastoralists and their stock trekked from further inland.\textsuperscript{39} These drives, with livestock and people sleeping in the open, would have been an opportune time for lions and other predators.\textsuperscript{40} As lions turned towards more densely populated herds of docile livestock, I suggest their hunting success improved and lion numbers increased. Pastoralists’ bow-and-arrows, spears, or rudimentary firearms, and botanical poisons would have been little deterrent. Whereas before the threat of lions may have been considered too great for pastoralists to make such dangerous treks, access to trade goods would have ameliorated some of the material effects of livestock loss. This period drew humans, livestock, and lions in northwest Namibia into a feedback loop interweaving international markets, livestock death, and human-lion conflict.

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\textbf{EUROPEAN STRENGTH AND THE KILLING OF ‘MAN-EATERS’}
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When European ‘explorers’ entered northwest Namibia during the nineteenth century, human-livestock-lion interactions were a familiar challenge to stock owners. Speaking of the end of the 1800s, one Himba pastoralist recounted,

\begin{quote}
In those days the cattle were properly herded because of hyenas and lions, which were all over here. During the night the people would not go out; sometimes the lions were even entering the homesteads to kill the cattle. Then the people were taking burning branches in order to protect the cattle.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} Coleman, Vicious, 49.
\textsuperscript{39} J. Kinahan, 'Cattle Paths and the Choreography of Late Pre-Colonial Contact and Trade on the Namib Desert Coast', South African Archaeological Bulletin 69:199 (2014), 96–102.
\textsuperscript{41} Frans Uarije, interviewed in 2005, from: M. Bollig, Shaping the African Savannah: From Capitalist Frontier to Arid Eden in Namibia (Cambridge, 2020), 36.
Western accounts of lions in northwest Namibia began with Francis Galton and C. J. Andersson in 1853. While traveling inland from the Skeleton Coast, they recorded lions being drawn by their party’s retinue of livestock. In a series of dramatic stories Andersson cast locals as terrified and helpless when facing lions. A typical incident of panic occurred when his partner’s party was stalked and overtaken,

the screechings of the terrified women and children...the hallooings of the men, the rush of the cattle and the sheep, firebrands whizzing through the air, the discharge of fire-arms, the growls of the lions, and other discordant noises, the scene was one which baffles description.

Such fear seems well-founded. During one incident Andersson’s employee was carried-off,

there arose an awful scream, followed by a death-like groan, such as I shall never forget...Two lions had entered the enclosures and succeeded in carrying away a poor fellow, whom they tore to pieces and devoured a short distance from our camp.

Like other Europeans, Andersson and Galton reproduced accounts of ‘white male gigantism’ for personal gain. In such accounts brave white men penetrate wild Africa to destroy fearsome man-eaters, while Africans are rendered largely helpless with fear. These frequently conclude with hunters killing the offending lion to a subsequent chorus of African praise. Such tales of muscular colonialism reproduced perspectives of European over African, and civilization over nature. Human-animal historian Simon Pooley has shown that European hunters considered lions and crocodiles to be Africa’s most fearsome animals. As historian Jane Carruthers notes, ‘[h]unting lions came to be regarded as the ultimate test of masculine bravery and strength’.

Though Andersson and Galton’s accounts may have sold books back in the metropole, their experiences were uncommon and largely represented a passing era. By the twentieth century, European interactions with lions primarily took the form of settler-farmers eradicating lions and other predators for economic purposes by any means necessary. During the colonial era, South Africa and Namibia maintained Africa’s only large white settler underclass. Environmental historians have examined the historical interactions between this underclass and predators – emphasizing jackals (Canis mesomelas). As Namibia

42 C. Andersson, Lake Ngami; or, Explorations and Discoveries during Four Years’ Wanderings in the Wilds of Southwestern Africa (New York, 1856), 53.
43 C. Andersson, The Okavango River: A Narrative of Travel, Exploration, and Adventure (New York, 1861), 140.
44 Andersson, The Okavango, 139.
46 e.g. Andersson, The Okavango, 139; 293; 300–301; Lake Ngami, 302; F. Galton, The Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa (London, 1853), 59.
became incorporated into the South African empire, this growing underclass killed predators in untold numbers. Among settlers, lions’ fearsome traits were secondary to their economic effects: lions were primarily considered to be vermin needing to be destroyed to secure rangelands for livestock.

LION ERADICATION AS WHITE DOMINATION
Profit and capitalist growth were the driving forces behind white colonialism in Namibia. Efforts to control valuable pasture land for white benefit resulted in widespread lion death on white farms, while lions and other predators persisted on African-controlled rangelands. The adjoining areas of white-owned farms, Etosha, and the Kaokoveld ‘native reserve’ or ‘ethnic homeland’, highlight the different outcomes of human-lion interactions due to efforts aimed at securing white economic power.

In the early twentieth century white settler numbers in Namibia rose dramatically. Within white farmland, predator eradication was important for securing tenuous livelihoods and buttressing a marginal pastoral economy with the goal of reproducing an uncertain white supremacy. As van Sittert has shown for the Cape Colony/Province, marginally-productive rangelands forced farmers to drive livestock far-afIELD, sometimes for days at a time. This meant that stock often slept in the open, as opposed to trekking back and forth each day to enclosures where they were more likely to suffer from diseases of overcrowding. Though fences would have been useful against small and medium-sized predators, expensive lion-proof fencing was beyond the means of most farmers – many of whom relied upon government cash grants and infrastructure loans. As white farms increased, colonial administrators responded to settler demands for assistance in eradicating lions and other ‘vermin’ (ongedierte).

Human-animal geographer John Heydinger has shown that white destruction of predators required extensive support such as tax relief, ammunition and industrial poisons at cost price, and through the recognition of ‘vermin clubs’ – whites-only hunting groups empowered to eradicate predators on privately-owned land. By contrast, non-whites

51 Botha, 'The Politics'.
54 Namibia National Archives, Windhoek, (NAN) South West Africa Administration (SWAA) 1349, Government of South West Africa, 'Draft Game Preservation Proclamation', Deputy Commissioner South West Africa Police 1921. NAN SWAA 2328, Letter from Peter Muller, Farmer, to Secretary of the Protectorate, 3 May 1918; NAN SWAA 2328, 'Destruction of Vermin: Sale of Strychnine', Secretary for South West Africa to All Magistrates. 2 March 1923.
were disallowed from receiving ammunition and poisons, and from joining vermin clubs.\textsuperscript{55} Similar to the destruction of wildlife by Afrikaans-speaking farmers in eastern South Africa, the slaughter of predators served white Namibians’ ‘physical and economic survival’.\textsuperscript{56} As noted by Coleman of bear hunting in the southeastern United States, the necessity of such eradication indicated the socially and economically marginal positions settlers occupied.\textsuperscript{57}

Economic incentives did not preclude lion hunting from reproducing a mythos of white dominance. In Lawrence Green’s \textit{Lords of the Last Frontier}, typically rugged, masculine lion hunters in northwest Namibia were popularly portrayed as the vanguard of white civilization.\textsuperscript{58} Green praised one Outjo-area settler as a ‘great lion hunter’.\textsuperscript{59} Another, Karl Hartmann, was reputed to have killed at least fifty lions, only to die at the hands of a lion he wounded.\textsuperscript{60} Axel Eriksson, who was among Namibia’s first white settlers (1866-1901), was known to be a fearsome and experienced lion hunter.\textsuperscript{61} Though lion hunting evoked danger, more often than not it was the lions who died; surrendering their heads and skins for prominent display.\textsuperscript{62} More mundanely, German soldiers based at remote Fort Namutoni fought boredom by shooting lions from observation towers.\textsuperscript{63} As eminently recognizable symbols of Africa, lion destruction also visually reproduced white strength. Historian Patricia Hayes has shown how white photography depicted the Namibian frontier as an idealized landscape free from the debasing forces of western society.\textsuperscript{64} For example, photographs of the Ovamboland and Kaokoveld Native Commissioner, Carl ‘Cocky’ Hahn with lion trophies conveyed Hahn’s implicit dominance over nature. When Africans are present in these images, they stand adjacent to, rather than in the center of the frame – present but peripheral.\textsuperscript{65} The legacy of dead lions being appropriated as symbols of adventurous whites conquering the African wilderness is still part of lion hunting in Namibia.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{56} Carruthers, 'Changing', 187.
\textsuperscript{57} Coleman, 'Killed'.
\textsuperscript{58} L. Green, \textit{Lords of the Last Frontier: The Story of South West Africa and Its People of All Races} (Cape Town 1952).
\textsuperscript{59} Green, \textit{Lords}, 126.
\textsuperscript{60} Green, \textit{Lords}, 136.
\textsuperscript{61} P. Möller, \textit{Journey in Africa through Angola, Ovampoland and Damaraland} (Cape Town, 1899), 62.
\textsuperscript{62} NAN SWAA 2329, Letter from Rudolph Böhme, Onguma Farm to the Office of the Administrator, Windhoek, 23 June 1952.
\textsuperscript{63} Green, \textit{Lords}, 129; Schalkwyk and Berry, \textit{Etosha}, 46.
\textsuperscript{65} Bollig, \textit{Shaping}, 80.
GAME RESERVE NO. 2/ETOSHA
State assistance to support economic concerns, reinforced by masculinist factors, led to the dramatic decline of lions in white-controlled areas, such as Etosha. By 1912, lions in Etosha had become so rare that when Lieutenant Adolf Fisher heard them roaring near Namutoni, it was the first evidence of lions there in years.\textsuperscript{67} Rudolph Böhme, a long-time resident of Onguma farm bordering eastern Etosha, noted in 1952 that there were no lions in the area when he was young, until 1917.\textsuperscript{68}

The slaughter coincided with increasing colonial control over the northwest. In 1907, efforts to protect the white economy led to policies demarcating specific areas for settlers, Africans, and wildlife. The largest area set-aside was ‘Wildschutzgebiet Nr. 2.’ Originally encompassing the latter-day ethnic homelands of Kaokoveld and Damaraland, as well as Etosha, Game Reserve No. 2, was approximately 80,000 km\textsuperscript{2} – at that time the world’s largest wildlife reserve.\textsuperscript{69} The reserve’s creation was part of a trend in southern Africa of colonial governments designating African-controlled land for the protection of

\textsuperscript{67} H. Berry, ‘Historical Review of the Etosha Region and Its Subsequent Administration as a National Park’, \textit{Madoqua} 20:1 (1997) 5; Schalkwyk and Berry, \textit{Etosha}, 46.

\textsuperscript{68} NAN SWAA 2331 A.510/1, ‘Destruction of Lions’, Letter from Mr. R. Böhme, Onguma, Tsumeb. 7 March 1952.

\textsuperscript{69} Berry, ‘Historical Review’
charismatic wildlife, which was considered an economic and social resource.\textsuperscript{70} This practice also limited human mobility and increased state surveillance.\textsuperscript{71} The southern border of the reserve delineated the extent of German, and later South African, colonial possession: spaces to the north being considered ‘too rough and mountainous for European occupation.’\textsuperscript{72}

From its inception until the 1950s, Game Reserve No. 2 was almost entirely unfenced. African pastoralists, their livestock, and wildlife all made use of reserve land. Though lions may have been extirpated from southern Etosha, they persisted beyond the reach of white guns and poisons. In the first half of the century, humans and livestock were increasingly prohibited from Etosha and lions began returning. In 1924, G. C. Shortridge noted that lions inhabited ‘the Kaokoveld and Etosha Pan areas, in the second of which districts, owing to trapping and poisoning in the Game Reserve, they have been very much thinned out during recent years.’\textsuperscript{73} In a 1926 survey, Etosha and Ovamboland were estimated to contain 200 lions total.\textsuperscript{74} In 1934, Shortridge showed lions to be present around Etosha and increasingly plentiful further north, though he thought they were uncommon in Kaokoveld.\textsuperscript{75} As Böhme noted, even when lions no longer trespassed on his farm east of Etosha, they persisted in Kaokoveld; where whites infrequently went.\textsuperscript{76}

As Etosha’s profile as a wildlife reserve grew, the colonial administration’s stance on killing lions there changed. In 1922, the local magistrate supported the request of two whites to shoot lions at Okaukuejo.\textsuperscript{77} During the early 1930s vermin clubs ringed Etosha’s southern and eastern boundaries.\textsuperscript{78} In 1936 the vermin law was repealed, leaving the status of lions within the reserve unclear: though no longer classified as vermin, they were not explicitly protected. Lions could therefore be shot without fear of legal penalty. In 1938, Native Commissioner Hahn, also serving as the reserve’s warden, convinced the Secretary for South West Africa to enforce an existing prohibition against shooting within the reserve, though lions

\textsuperscript{72} NAN SWAA 1168, ‘Removal of Unauthorized Squatters in Southern Kaokoveld - Extension of the Northern Reserves Etc.’ from Native Commissioner, Ovamboland to Secretary SWA. 7 Jan. 1926.
\textsuperscript{73} NAN SWAA 1331, ‘The Third Percy Sladen and Kaffrarian Museum Expedition ”Ovamboland”’, 7 July-9 Dec. 1924.
\textsuperscript{74} Berry, ‘Historical’.
\textsuperscript{75} G. Shortridge, \textit{Mammals}.
\textsuperscript{76} NAN SWAA 231 A.510/1, ‘Destruction of Lions’ 7 March 1952; NAN SWAA 2329, ‘Proposed Extermination of Lions, Etosha Pan Game Reserve’, Secretary South West Africa to Magistrate, Grootfontein. 21 Apr. 1952.
\textsuperscript{77} NAN SWAA 2328, Outjo Magistrate to Secretary South West Africa, Telegram No. 161, 4:40 Pm, 27 Jun. 1922.
\textsuperscript{78} e.g. NAN SWAA 2330, ‘Otjovasandu Vermin Hunt Club’, Official Correspondence, Magistrate Outjo and Secretary South West Africa 1937; NAN SWAA 2328, ‘Grootfontein Farmers’ Association: Destruction of Vermin’, Official Correspondence: Magistrate Grootfontein to Secretary South West Africa. 20 Mar. 1935.
could still be killed, ‘in defence of human life or to prevent the infliction of personal injury’. On private (white-owned) land, lions remained fair quarry. Declassifying lions as vermin was an important step within the process of white’s developing conservation ethos around lions, which led to lions being classified among ‘specially protected’ species (Nature Conservation Act, No. 4/1975). As historian Michael Wise has shown, human classifications of predators have important ramifications for predator survival within a human-controlled world.

Nearly exterminated from white farmland, during the 1940s Etosha lions increasingly became a tourist attraction. Following the 1930s karakul sheep boom and World War II, Namibia’s white economy was on stronger footing, giving birth to a robust domestic tourism market. During this period interest in conserving Namibia’s environments and wildlife grew. Concurrently, lions still caused fear and destruction among African pastoral communities. This disparity had lasting effects on the geographic distribution of lions and other predators, leading to a spatially-explicit divergence in human-lion interactions that continued throughout the South African period.

PERSISTENCE IN KAOKOVELD

During South Africa rule, ‘natives’ were confined to reserves such as Kaokoveld, which was administered as part of Game Reserve No. 2 until 1947. Though no comprehensive records exist, it is clear that human-eating and the negative economic effects of lions persisted far longer in Kaokoveld than in neighboring white areas. From the 1920s to 1950s Kaokoveld inhabitants pleaded for government assistance to kill predators that were attacking livestock. In 1942, the Officer-in-Charge of Native Affairs for Kaokoveld reported that, ‘[i]t is not possible to ascertain how many animals were killed by lions and hyenas, but, the natives maintain that they have sustained very heavy losses’. Another official described lions and other predators as having been, ‘troublesome during the year…the natives frequently bring in reports of the losses

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80 M. Wise, Producing Predators: Wolves, Work, and Conquest in the Northern Rockies (Lincoln, 2016).
sustained by them. Complaints among Kaokoveld residents occurred frequently enough that a category detailing human-predator problems, termed ‘Carnivora’, became standard within government reports.

Africans’ struggles with predators went largely unaddressed by government officials. While white settlers benefitted from government assistance, African’s were denied access to requested firearms and industrial poisons. When South Africa took control of Namibia during World War I, at least 155 firearms were seized from Kaokoveld residents. The few communities with firearms often relied upon a single one. Ammunition was rarely issued, and then as few as five to ten rounds. Africans were not trusted with the use of strychnine or other poisons. Kaokoveld residents were forced to find their own solutions – yielding predictably tragic results. Certain residents confronted lions armed only with spears. As one report stated,

This usually results in several of the hunters being mauled. Only a few days ago [a Himba] was treated for an arm wound caused by a lion, and he intimated that two of his less fortunate comrades were laid up with more serious wounds.[89]

Human-eating persisted. In the early 1940s a Sesfontein headman was killed by lions. In 2017, an elder man remembered his own fearful encounter, ‘[w]hen I was a young man, I was with a man who was attacked by a lion.’ Another shared this story,

One man was looking for honey…He went into the mountains and was camping there and the lions killed him there. The people around here were looking for him, looking for him…My father went into the mountains to get some honey also and saw the bones [of the man] lying there and brought the bones back so they could bury the bones. This is when I was a very young person – my father told me about this.[92]

Complaints following officials’ inaction indicate government’s power over African livelihoods and safety. Addressing government officials, one Kaokoveld leader summarized the struggles and inadequate government response,

Here in the Kaokoveld we live only on our livestock…We thank you for the guns we have received. They are not enough. The Kaokoveld is very big. The cartridges are also too few.

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87 Bollig, Shaping, 110.
90 Green, Lords, 42.
91 Interview with Puros Pastoralist #4, 1 December 2017.
92 Interview with Sesfontein Pastoralist #6, 24 November 2017.
We have trouble with lions, hyaenas and wild dogs. Vermin has destroyed a lot of our stock...These are our difficulties which we report.93

Officials remained incredulous, believing livestock loses were exaggerated and occurred due to inattentive herding. In 1946, the Officer-in-Charge of Native Affairs for Kaokoveld stated his position plainly,

Numerous reports were received of the losses sustained as a result of the onslufts of carnivora, but I feel convinced that the natives are inclined to exaggerate their losses, and that a high percentage of these losses are due to the carelessness of their herd[er]s, also to the neglect of adequate kraaling at night.94

Denigrating African livestock herding practices was, and remains, a typical response among Europeans in Namibia.95 Yet, ‘adequate kraaling at night’ was often not an option. In arid areas with limited grazing, bringing stock in and out of an enclosure each night strains animals and degrades grasses near the homestead.96 When asked why she does not kraal her stock, one Sesfontein pastoralist summarized her risk assessment. In her experience stock being kraaled each night will lose twenty-five to thirty per cent of their body condition, due to overcrowding and tramping back-and-forth to available grazing. In contrast, if they are allowed to sleep away from the homestead where grazing is available, perhaps predators will kill some of them.97

In addition to forming part of a ‘supremacist, imperious, and aggressive’ discourse among colonial officials, livestock death also constrained Africans livelihoods.98 Because native reserves were intended to serve as reservoirs of cheap labor for white-owned mines and farms, dead livestock furthered state economic goals of maintaining a prostrate African peasantry. The economic ramifications of livestock policies during the colonial era have been examined by historian and anthropologist Michael Bollig, who has detailed the state’s use of veterinary and environmental means to keep Kaokoveld pastoralists impoverished.99 Heydinger has shown that colonial era policies focused on livestock movements and predator eradication were interwoven with state economic concerns.100 Furthermore, livestock loss also had social and cultural costs. Bollig and other anthropologists have examined the central role of livestock, particularly cattle, in the lives of northwest Namibian pastoralists.101

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95 Personal observation.
96 van Sittert, 'Keeping'.
97 Sesfontein Pastoralist #10, at community meeting, 10 April 2018.
98 Bollig, Shaping, 81.
100 J. Heydinger, 'Eserewondo Rozongombe: Livestock as Sites of Power and Resistance in Kaokoveld, Namibia', Environment and History, (forthcoming), 1–26; 'Vermin'.
rendering access to meat, milk, and cash, cattle embody nonmaterial values and historical continuities. When lions kill livestock, they can rupture trans-generational cultural continuities. Because they also threaten human lives, lions are still seen as particularly dangerous and destructive among Kaokoveld pastoralists.\footnote{J. Heydinger, C. Packer, and J. Tsaneb, 'Desert-Adapted Lions on Communal Land: Surveying the Costs Incurred by, and Perspectives of, Communal-Area Livestock Owners in Northwest Namibia', \textit{Biological Conservation} 236 (2019), 496–504.}

Similar to other colonial settings, the difficulties from predators in Kaokoveld were driven by unjust social policies, and were not simply the inevitable result of livestock-based livelihoods within the remote, rugged, arid region.\footnote{van Sittert, 'Review', 312; Bollig, 'The Colonial'.} Unsupported and prohibited by government from departing Kaokoveld due to policies of racialized isolation, and unable to make use of modern firearms or poisons, pastoralists were unable to eradicate lions. This unrelieved antagonism further entrenched negative feelings towards lions, which yielded challenges for conservationists in coming generations. Near the Etosha border in the late 1960s, one government official was requested by his ovaHerero companions to shoot a group of nearby lions. Lecturing the ovaHereros on the virtues of wildlife conservation was no use: “‘Lions are not animals,” they insisted. “They are the devil’s children and should be killed wherever they are.'”\footnote{G. Owen-Smith, \textit{An Arid Eden: A Personal Account of Conservation in the Kaokoveld} (Johannesburg, 2010), 135.}

**CONSERVATION IN ETOSHA**

By the 1950s, Etosha was a haven for wildlife. Though lions frequently crossed Etosha’s unfenced boundaries on to neighboring farmlands, within the park they were increasingly objects of official responsibility and tourists’ affection. Previously wildlife conservation had been a tertiary consideration for government staff, behind supporting the settler economy and keeping Africans segregated and pacified.\footnote{Owen-Smith, \textit{An Arid}, 45-66; L. Rizzo, \textit{Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in North-Western Namibia, 1870s-1950s} (Switzerland, 2012).}

Because access to northern ‘native’ areas was tightly controlled, and the vast majority of white areas had been converted to farmland, Etosha was among the few places where white Namibians could view lions. At this point lion conservation begins in earnest: increasingly human-lion interactions were mediated by state officials aiming to conserve, not eradicate, lions.

For Etosha tourists, lions were star attractions and the staff worked to satisfy their guests. Wildlife management during this period was ad-hoc, leading to a variety of frightening, often surprising, and occasionally humorous interactions between tourists and lions. Tourist accommodations were rough-and-ready, including camping at waterholes shared with wildlife. One time two elderly women were confined to a restroom for hours as a lion pride encircled the structure. When one lioness fell into a half-filled swimming pool, a quick-thinking witness threw her a dry stump, which she clung to while the pool was...
refilled. It is not recorded where staff hid themselves once she exited. At the Leeubron (‘lion source’) waterhole, when an emaciated lioness, dubbed ‘Isabella,’ was struggling to provision five cubs, Etosha staff regularly provided the group with wildebeest (Connochaetes taurinus) and plains zebra (Equus quagga) carcasses. Routinised feedings attracted other lions and the ‘lion restaurant’ became a tourist attraction.

The provisioning of ‘Isabella’ demonstrates a certain type of care for individual animal welfare directed from humans to lions. ‘Isabella’ and a pride male named ‘Castor’ were the first lions in the region given names – a practice that became increasingly common. Previously, lions and other predators only entered into human records as individuals when they came into violent contact with humans. With the rise of conservation, lions given individual identities by people became durable historical characters rather than simply generic members of their species. Human-animal historian Etienne Benson has shown that the naming of animals is associated with a set of ethical claims concerning their status as both unique individuals and sentient beings deserving human consideration. From fearsome pest to cosseted individuals, human-lion relationships in the Etosha region transformed dramatically in fewer than thirty years.

While white tourists interacted with lions from positions of relative safety, Africans, either working within the park or moving through it, encountered lions in very different settings. Near the Okondeka waterhole lions chased four Ovambo roadworkers up a tree. Three were pulled down and eaten, while the other watched. Occasionally unidentified human remains were found in the park, ostensibly of people transiting to-and-from Ovamboland to secure formal employment in the white economy. Without access to transport, some risked the journey on foot.

While the park was safe for lions and could be dangerous for people, the opposite was true beyond Etosha’s borders. During the 1940s Etosha lions were considered a menace by farmers, leading to an estimated eighty lions per year being killed on neighboring farms and prompting one farmer to request permission to pursue lions into the reserve. The request was rejected. Peter Stark, who later served as an Etosha ranger, claimed to have killed 75 lions while employed on a farm bordering Etosha during the 1940s-50s. Stark later wrote that, ‘In those days if you asked Nature Conservation for help, your pleas fell on deaf ears.’ This put conservationists in Etosha at odds with both European and Africans on surrounding lands.

The 1950s-70s were also a period in which the South African state sought to simplify, arrange, classify, and order its human subjects and environments. These techniques contributed to the creation of

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109 Miescher, Namibia’s, 183–85.
what anthropologist James Scott terms a ‘legible’ state. The fetish for racial classification had lasting effects for the people, animals, and environments of northwest Namibia. This process was implemented following the recommendations of the so-called ‘Odendaal Plan’, which was intended by the apartheid government to spatially organize Namibia upon ‘rational’ planning principles. This included separating Etosha and its wildlife from the surrounding landscape and disallowing livestock from grazing within the park. The effects of the Odendaal Plan codified a new type of space for lions and entrenched differing human-lion interactions within the park and beyond its borders. The similarities in the apartheid government’s confinement of Africans and wildlife is evident. Both took place with the support of white settlers who overwhelmingly stood on the side of colonial authority.

The effects of the Odendaal Plan punctuated an era of transformation in human-lion relationships. As Etosha’s borders were fenced, first along its southern boundary in 1961-63, then completely in 1973 by 850 km of ‘game-proof’ fence, wildlife movements between the park and neighboring lands declined. This had unanticipated benefits for lions. Prey species were generally confined to the park, likely leading to increased lion recruitment. In contrast, lions exploited gaps in Etosha’s fences, frustrating farmers’ efforts to keep livestock safe. During this period, lion numbers in Etosha rose from an estimated 200 in 1953, to approximately 500 at the end of the 1970s. Henceforth the park would serve as the source of lions in the region.

**DISAPPEARANCE IN KAOKOVELD**

Following the implementation of the Odendaal Plan, lions in Kaokoveld remained beyond the purview of government conservationists. During the 1960s, Kaokoveld existed on the edges of a war zone. The accelerating war for independence led to an influx of firearms and industrial poisons previously prohibited to Africans, primarily from South African military personnel hoping to curry favor with local leaders. As a result, wildlife in Kaokoveld came under increasing persecution, both from residents seeking provisions,

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114 [citation removed]
115 Miescher, *Namibia’s*, 159–68.
117 Miescher, *Namibia’s*, 152.
and elite government officials who used the region for illegal sport hunting.\footnote{Owen-Smith, An Arid, 189; Government of South Africa, 'South African Air Force Helicopter: Game Shooting', in House of Assembly, Questions and Replies, 3rd Session, 6th Parliament, 2 Feb. to 22 Jun. 1979 (Vol. 83).} The effects of these practices were unquantified. Official Kaokoveld records on wildlife are not widely available from the 1960s-80, no systematic wildlife surveys were performed until 1976, and no government conservationists were posted to Kaokoveld until 1980.\footnote{NAN Bantu Affairs Opuwo (BOP) 83 21-2-2 Kaokoland Wildsensus, 17-23 October 1976, from: Bollig, Shaping, 219.}

Information concerning Kaokoveld lions during this period comes from scattered accounts and anecdotes, such as unfounded rumors that lions there were ‘maneless and generally grey in colour’.\footnote{K. Tinley, ‘Etosha and the Kaokoveld,’ African Wild Life 25:1 (1971): 16.} A key witness to this era was government official Garth Owen-Smith, who was posted to Kaokoveld from 1968-70.\footnote{G. Owen-Smith, The Kaokoveld: An Ecological Base for Future Development Planning (Pretoria, 1971), 50–2.} Owen-Smith’s anecdotal accounts include finding four desiccated lion carcasses in the dunes near Cape Fria, and records of locals’ encounters with lions around northern villages and water points. These provided clues to the persistence of lions in Kaokoveld. Rare for this time, Owen-Smith, a white South African, sought collegiality, respect, and friendship with Kaokoveld’s African residents. The result is environmental information that otherwise would have gone unrecorded. In these accounts lions primarily play the role of fearsome pests, frequently attacking livestock. They were in-turn harassed and killed by residents. Thought to have been formerly widespread, by the 1980s lions were considered greatly reduced by firearms and poison.\footnote{A. Hall-Martin, C. Walker, and J. du P. Bothma, Kaokoveld: The Last Wilderness (Pretoria, 1988), 32.}

In 1971, Owen-Smith estimated that approximately forty lions resided in Kaokoveld with perhaps a few additional migrants from Etosha.\footnote{P. Viljoen, ‘Veldtipes, Verspreiding van Die Groter Soogdiere, En Enkele Aspekte van Die Ekologie van Kaokoland’ (MSc thesis, University of Pretoria, 1980).}

The first comprehensive account of Kaokoveld lions was given by ‘Slang’ Viljoen in 1980.\footnote{Viljoen, ‘Veldtipes’, 349.} Finding that lions were nowhere plentiful in the region, Viljoen estimated that four remaining western prides contained no more than 25 total individuals, with another thirty in the southeast originating from Etosha.\footnote{Viljoen, ‘Veldtipes’, 349 (translation mine).}

He conveys a population poised to disappear,

The status of the lion in Kaokoveld is uncertain because it is intensively hunted down. Until recently, the lions were also killed by poison. Only in the inhospitable, uninhabited areas will the lions survive for a while, but with the opening of the area for four-wheel drive vehicles, these lions are no longer safe either.\footnote{Viljoen, ‘Veldtipes’, 349 (translation mine).}

A dramatic reduction of predators during the 1970-90s is evident in the transformation of herding practices. Bollig has shown that methods of ‘loose herding’, where livestock are escorted in the general direction of
grazing and left to return home at night, developed as a consequence of decreased concern for predators during this period.\textsuperscript{129}

Viljoen’s pessimism was prescient. Beginning in 1978/9 drought struck Kaokoveld. This resulted in widespread livestock and wildlife starvation.\textsuperscript{130} Increased numbers of weak prey and carcasses temporarily benefited the region’s lions. Prey species were devasted: mountain zebra (Equus zebra) numbers declined by 84 per cent, oryx (Oryx gazella) by 87 per cent, and springbok (Antidorcas marsupialis) by 96 per cent. Plains zebra disappeared entirely. Livestock experienced a similar decline.\textsuperscript{131} Among Himba residents the height of the drought was known as ‘Otjita’ (‘the dying’): a period defined by ‘a complete breakdown of herding’ and ‘outright starvation and social disintegration’ that signaled disaster for people and livestock.\textsuperscript{132} In contrast to white farmers who received various forms of generous state assistance until 1990, what little assistance Kaokoveld pastoralists received during apartheid usually took the form of boreholes drilled to water livestock.\textsuperscript{133} During the drought water was of little use, as there was no available grazing. Bollig and local conservationists have suggested that the geographic spread of boreholes worsened the effects of drought. During the 1970s pastoralists exploited Kaokoveld rangelands that previously lacked available water. This expanded the reach and size of livestock herds. As a result, unexploited grasses dwindled and starvation ensued.\textsuperscript{134}

The benefits of drought for lions were short-lived. When prey numbers dwindled predators suffered in-turn and lions began starving.\textsuperscript{135} The net effect was that lions and other predators increasingly troubled residents; piling-on state policies that kept people hungry and poor. As Rangarajan has shown, ‘[c]arnivores may not make social distinctions, but the uneven spread of wealth made some people far more risk-prone than others.’\textsuperscript{136} In one community a lioness entered the schoolgrounds while children were present. Nearby, a group of fourteen lions killed 96 sheep and seventeen goats in one evening.\textsuperscript{137} In early 1982, the last known human fatality occurred when a starving lioness killed a young child in her home. The lioness was shot by military personnel from a nearby fort, while still consuming the girl’s body.\textsuperscript{138} Many of the region’s lions were shot by professional hunters, or shot, trapped, and poisoned by locals. At least 76 lions were

\textsuperscript{129} Bollig, \textit{Shaping}, 268 ft. 26.
\textsuperscript{130} Bollig, \textit{Shaping}, 228.
\textsuperscript{131} Owen-Smith, \textit{An Arid}, 364-6.
\textsuperscript{132} Bollig, \textit{Shaping}, 227.
\textsuperscript{134} Interview with G. Owen-Smith, 10 November 2017.
\textsuperscript{136} Rangarajan, ‘Animals,’ 120.
\textsuperscript{137} Owen-Smith, \textit{An Arid}, 352–53; Interview with Anabeb Pastoralist #10, 27 July 2017.
\textsuperscript{138} Interview with Sesfontein Pastoralist #8, 25 November 2017; Interview with Conservancy Leader #3, 11 March 2018; Interview with Conservancy Leader #7, 26 November 2017.
killed in the southern part of the region alone. By 1986 it was estimated that only twenty to thirty lions inhabited Kaokoveld. By 1991 conservationists believed none did. In contrast, during this period Etosha lions were considered so numerous that some were given contraceptives to limit reproduction.

CONCLUSION

Following independence, human-lion relationships in northwest Namibia remain largely defined by their proximity to the Etosha fence. In 2017, one pastoralist living west of Etosha said that, ‘the lions that are coming into the kraal [and killing livestock] are the ones from Etosha. Because they are staying in[side] the fence and are not afraid of people.’ Towards the end of the 1990s a population of approximately 20 lions was discovered in Kaokoveld’s rugged Kharokhoab mountains. Augmented by lions dispersing from Etosha, this remnant population recolonized southern Kaokoveld rangelands under the watchful gaze of increasingly powerful government, NGO, and local conservation partnerships. In the new millennium, northwest Namibia became a wellspring of community-based conservation, in the form of communal

139 M. Reardon, *The Besieged*, 34.
141 P. Stander, *Vanishing Kings: Lions of the Namib Desert*, (Johannesburg, 2018), 46.
142 H. Berry, 'Ecological'.
143 Interview with Conservancy Leader #7
144 Stander, *Vanishing*. 
conservancies. With the assistance of Namibian government and NGO staff partnering with local conservationists, lions have made a comeback. By 2015 communal land in Kaokoveld contained an estimated 180 lions. An increasing number of lions has given rise to the shared conviction among pastoralists that lions once again threaten people and livestock. Said one pastoralist,

In the olden days my father and the people living here were killing lions. And so the lions were stealing [livestock and running] because the lion know, ‘if I kill something, they will track me’. But now, since independence, lions are taking out of the kraal and they are lying there and they are eating.

Perspectives that lions endanger humans and livelihoods have engendered tensions between pastoralists and the post-independence government. Said one pastoralist, ‘The problem of the lion…lions come and kill someone’s cattle that they are living from. Living from the milk or whatever. That is when people are getting angry.’ Since 2000, 80 per cent of known lion (non-cub) mortalities, and 100 per cent of known sub-adult mortalities were due to lions being killed by people. Locals consider government and NGO responses to livestock and lion deaths to be asymmetric: ‘The government is responding [to livestock deaths] by sending people, maybe one car. But if there is a lion injured, then they will maybe send eight cars.’ Another pastoralist states the connection between livelihood and lions succinctly, ‘I am becoming poor because of lions.’ Because lions have been eradicated from white farmlands, the burden of conserving lions in northwest Namibia, driven by increasing interest from Namibians and the international community, falls disproportionately on residents of communal land.

While both Kaokoveld pastoralists and private (primarily white) land-holders south of Etosha still suffer the effects of human-lion conflict, colonial legacies have limited pastoralists’ economic and social mobility. Within the Sesfontein constituency, which encompasses the majority of contemporary ‘core-lion range’ in the northwest, forty per cent of residents live on one US dollar per day or less, while 23 per cent live on 73 US cents per day or less. In contrast, within the Outjo and Kamanjab constituencies south of Etosha, 18 and 19 per cent of people live on one US dollar per day or less, respectively, while eight and nine per cent live on 73 US cents per day or less. The Kunene Region (encompassing present-day Kaokoveld) maintains Namibia’s highest drop-out rates among primary school children and only 55 per

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145 MET, ‘Human-Lion’.
146 Interview with Puros Pastoralist #2, 16 November 2017.
147 Interview with Conservancy Leader #1, 20 February 2018.
148 MET, ‘Human-Lion’.
149 Interview with Conservancy Leader #6, 15 November 2017.
150 Interview with Sesfontein Pastoralist #3, 2 December 2017.
152 MET, ‘Human-Lion’, 13; Namibia National Planning Commission, ‘Namibia Poverty Mapping’ (Windhoek 2012). Data by ethnicity were not available.
cent of residents complete primary school by age seventeen. These unequal livelihood outcomes contribute to ongoing difficulties for the government and local communities in managing lions.

The geography of lions in northwest Namibia is largely the result of colonial era policies which supported white supremacy. Currently the Etosha lion population is secure and appears to be augmenting numbers on communal land. Further west, lions have returned to the Skeleton Coast National Park. Livestock are prohibited from Etosha and human access is stringently controlled. Lions no longer inhabit white farmland. The communal lands of former Kaokoveld are the only spaces in the region where humans, livestock, and lions co-exist.

For Africans in Kaokoveld and Namibia’s underclass of white settlers, historical interactions at the human-livestock-lion nexus were more similar than dissimilar. The key difference was the role of the state in resolving or heightening human-lion tensions by enabling or constraining human agency; short of destruction, the state was unable to effectively limit lion agency. Livestock too have been a critical factor in this history: human-livestock-lion interactions almost universally are agonistic experiences for all three types of actors. On white farmland and within Etosha these tensions were relieved by removing at least one of these actors. Similar to Swanepoel’s findings concerning human-jackal interactions in southern Namibia, human-lion interactions have been ‘biopolitical…in which the logics of power are shown to be manifest in…animal governance and killing’. When examining human-livestock-lion interactions, one should also ask what role the state plays. As such, human-livestock-(state)-lion interactions continue to reproduce certain social and economic inequalities, including the marginalization of Kaokoveld pastoralists.

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155 Swanepoel, 'Habits', 129.